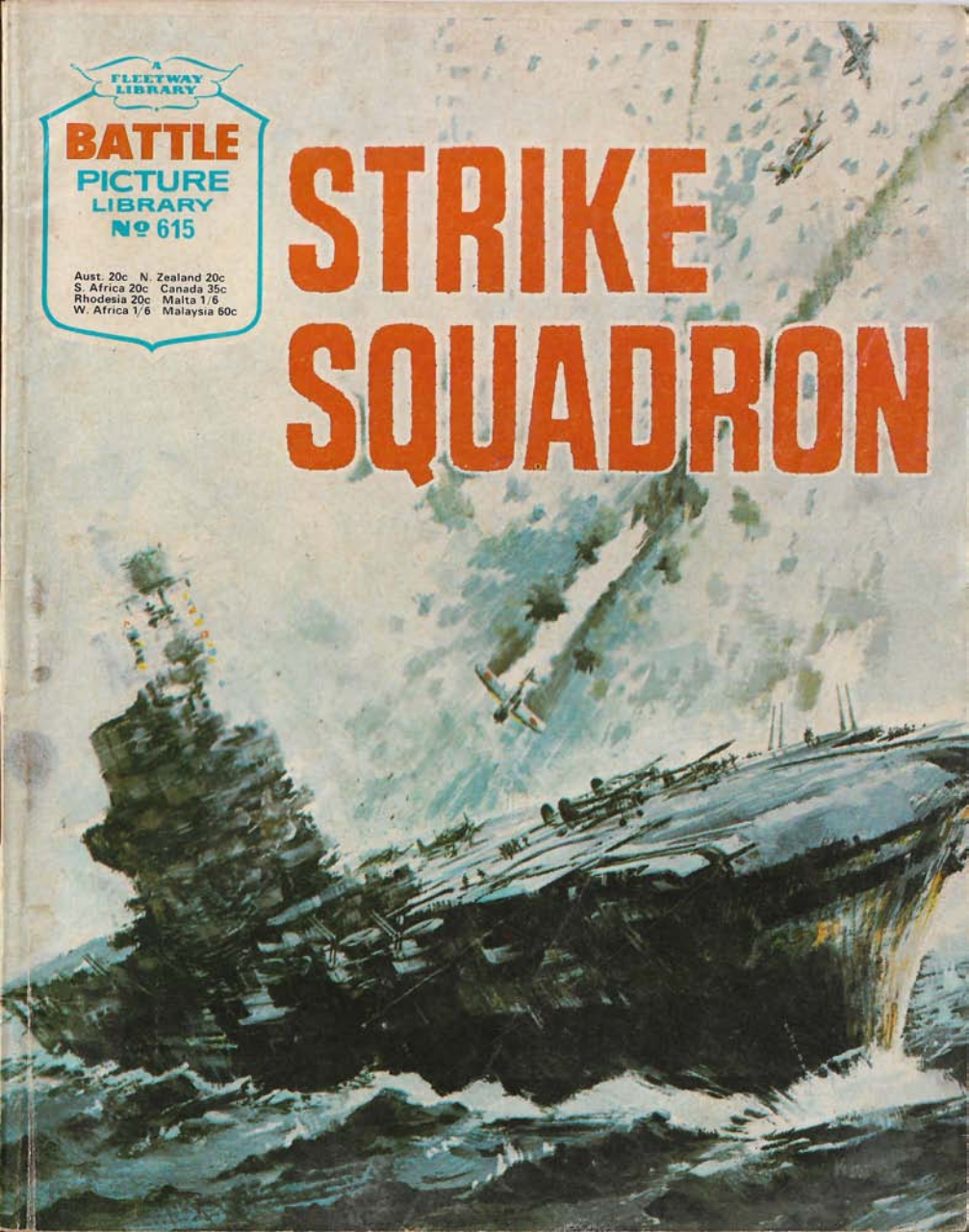


A  
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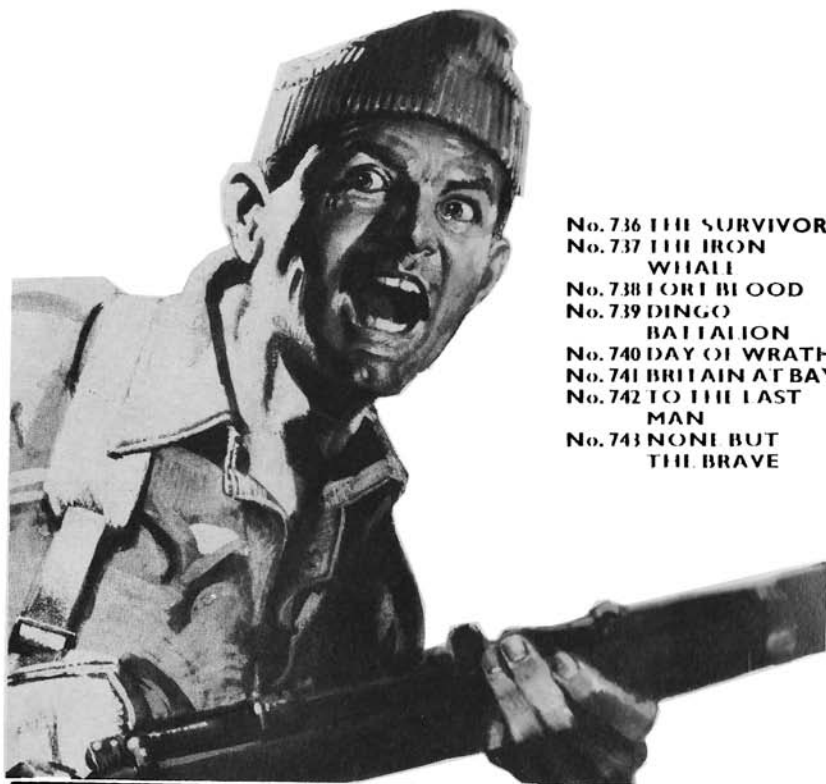
# STRIKE SQUADRON



**ALSO ON SALE NOW**

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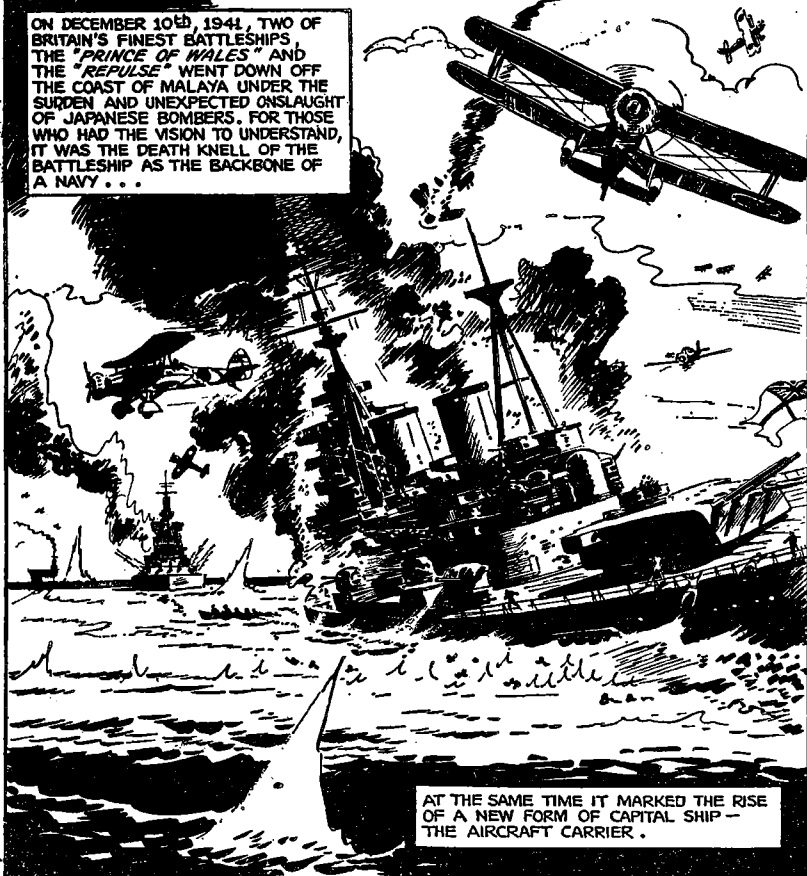
No. 736 THE SURVIVORS  
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No. 741 BRITAIN AT BAY  
No. 742 TO THE LAST  
MAN  
No. 743 NONE BUT  
THE BRAVE

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**8 Terrific Issues Every Month**

# STRIKE SQUADRON

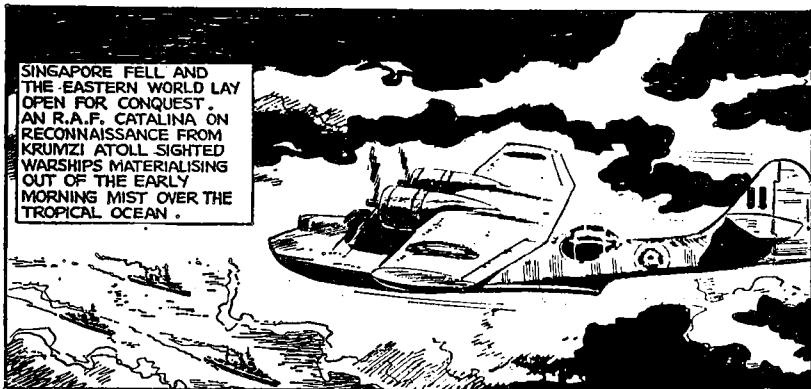
ON DECEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>, 1941, TWO OF BRITAIN'S FINEST BATTLESHIPS, THE "PRINCE OF WALES" AND THE "REPULSE" WENT DOWN OFF THE COAST OF MALAYA UNDER THE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED ONSLAUGHT OF JAPANESE BOMBERS. FOR THOSE WHO HAD THE VISION TO UNDERSTAND, IT WAS THE DEATH KNEEL OF THE BATTLESHIP AS THE BACKBONE OF A NAVY . . .



AT THE SAME TIME IT MARKED THE RISE OF A NEW FORM OF CAPITAL SHIP — THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER .

# Chapter 1. CAPTAIN'S ORDERS

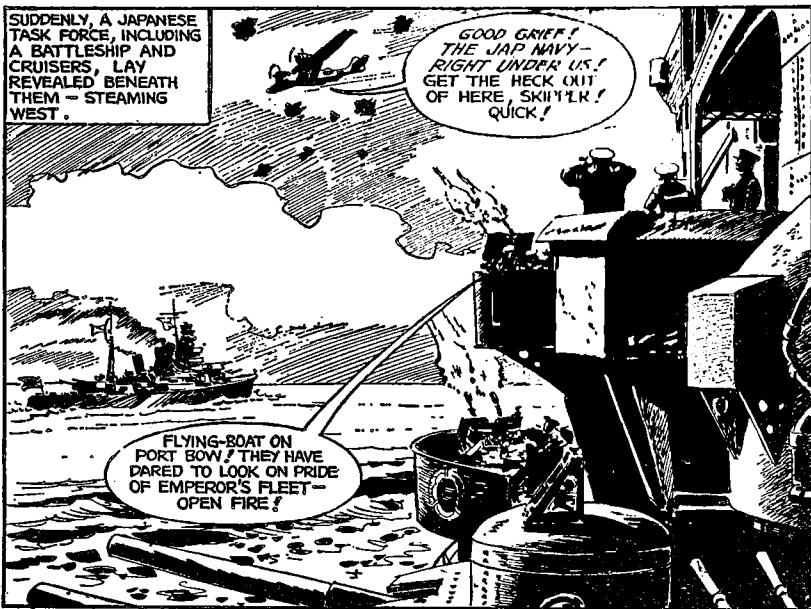
SINGAPORE FELL AND THE EASTERN WORLD LAY OPEN FOR CONQUEST. AN R.A.F. CATALINA ON RECONNAISSANCE FROM KRUMZI ATOLL SIGHTED WARSHIPS MATERIALISING OUT OF THE EARLY MORNING MIST OVER THE TROPICAL OCEAN.



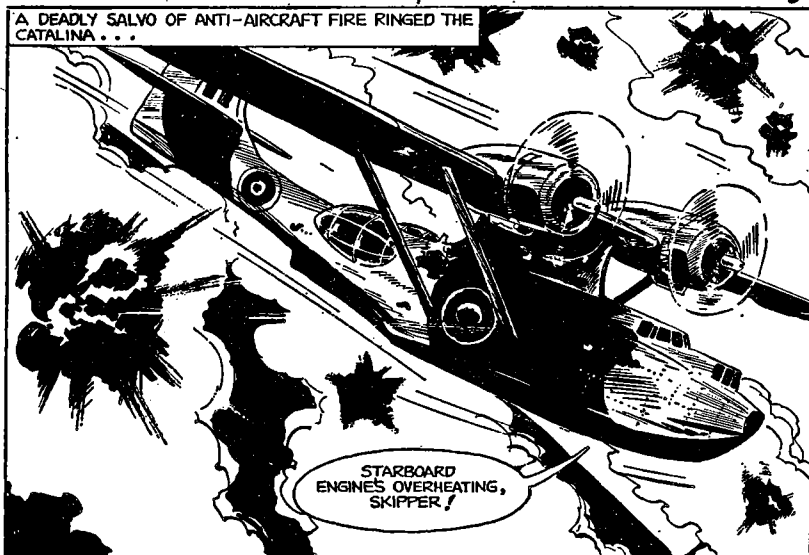
SUDDENLY, A JAPANESE TASK FORCE, INCLUDING A BATTLESHIP AND CRUISERS, LAY REVEALED BENEATH THEM - STEAMING WEST.

GOOD GRIEF!  
THE JAP NAVY -  
RIGHT UNDER US!  
GET THE HECK OUT  
OF HERE, SKITT'ER!  
QUICK!

FLYING-BOAT ON  
PORT BOW! THEY HAVE  
DARED TO LOOK ON PRIDE  
OF EMPEROR'S FLEET -  
OPEN FIRE!



A DEADLY SALVO OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE RINGED THE CATALINA . . .

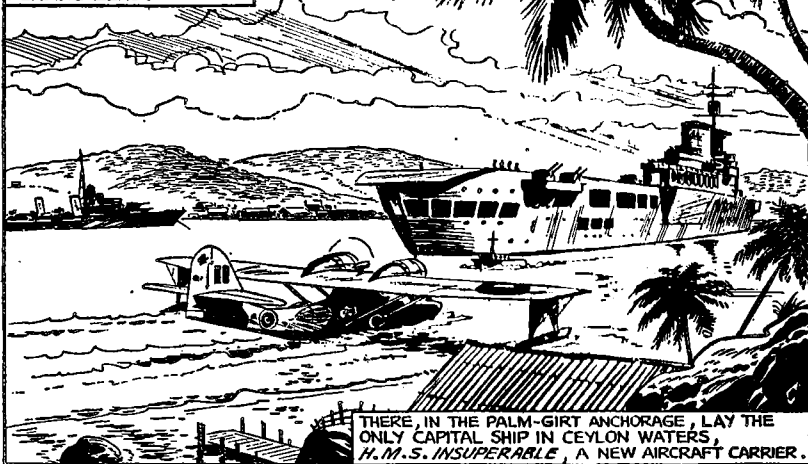


STARBOARD  
ENGINES OVERHEATING,  
SKIPPER!



CAN YOU  
HEAR ME ON THE  
INTER-COM? GOOD . . .  
LISTEN! THE RADIO'S SMASHED  
AND IN A BAD WAY . . . WE'RE  
LIKELY TO LOSE ONE ENGINE  
BUT WE'VE GOT TO REACH  
CEYLON TO TELL 'EM WHAT  
WE'VE SEEN .

WITH ONE ENGINE OUT OF ACTION AND THE CONTROLS BARELY HOLDING TOGETHER, THE CATALINA LIMPED TOWARDS TRINCOMALEE. THEY JUST MADE IT WITH THE FUEL GAUGES READING ZERO.



THERE, IN THE PALM-GIRT ANCHORAGE, LAY THE ONLY CAPITAL SHIP IN CEYLON WATERS, H.M.S. INSUPERABLE, A NEW AIRCRAFT CARRIER.

THE CATALINA'S PILOT AND NAVIGATOR WENT ABOARD AND WERE IMMEDIATELY TAKEN TO THE CAPTAIN OF *INSUPERABLE* BY ITS YOUNG COMMANDER-FLYING, MICHAEL WILLOWBY.



AND BY SOME FANTASTIC LUCK, SIR, THEY SENT NO ZEROS AFTER US.

I SEE... WELL, WINGS! IT LOOKS AS IF I'M TO SEE MY FIRST ACTION IN THIS BOX OF FLYING TRICKS. WOULD TO HARRY IT WAS A PROPER SHIP O' THE LINE -



## Chapter 2. **FIRST BLOOD**



## Strike Squadron

9

I DON'T LIKE THE RIG O' THIS SHIP AND I'LL ASK YOU FLYING PERSONNEL TO REMEMBER THAT IT IS A SHIP BEFORE IT IS A CONFOUNDED FLOATING AERODROME. AND THAT YOUR BRANCH MEN ARE SAILORS BEFORE YOU'RE AIRMEN.

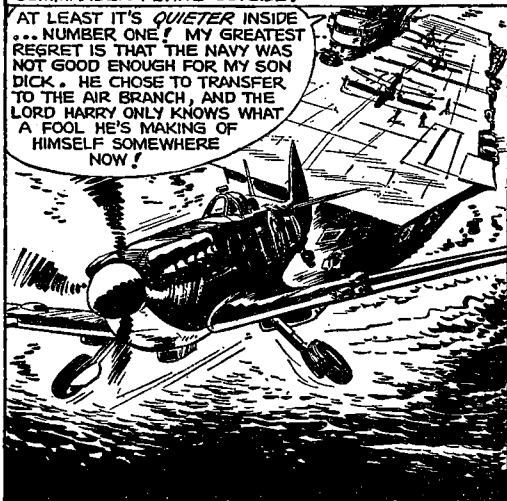


AYE, AYE, SIR!

IT DID NOT LOOK AS IF IT WAS GOING TO BE A HAPPY SHIP.

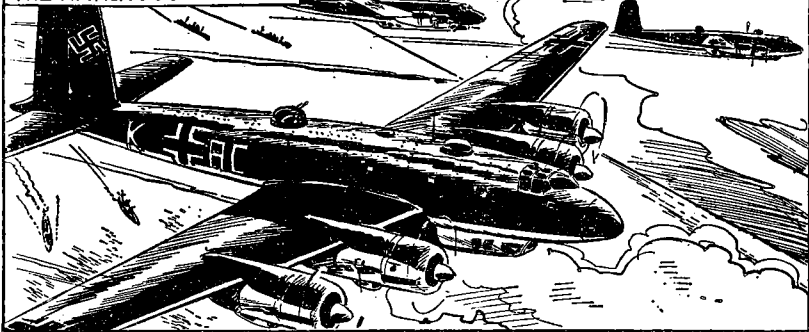
CAPTAIN GLANVILLE CAME FROM A LONG LINE OF ADMIRALS, HIS TRADITIONS ROOTED IN THE SEA. NOW HE FOUND IT IRKSOME STEAMING STEADILY INTO WIND FOR FLYING OFF. IT WAS ALMOST AS IF HE WERE HAVING TO TAKE ORDERS FROM HIS YOUTHFUL COMMANDER-FLYING OUTSIDE.

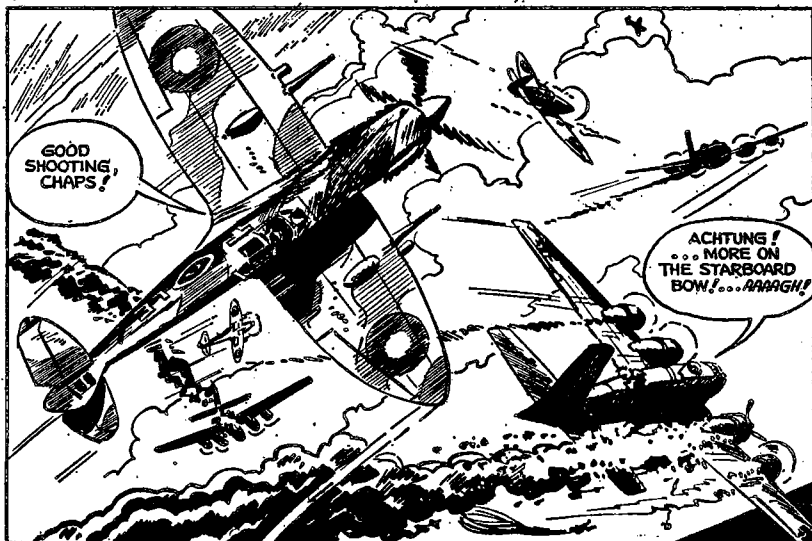
AT LEAST IT'S QUIETER INSIDE ... NUMBER ONE! MY GREATEST REGRET IS THAT THE NAVY WAS NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR MY SON DICK. HE CHOSE TO TRANSFER TO THE AIR BRANCH, AND THE LORD HARRY ONLY KNOWS WHAT A FOOL HE'S MAKING OF HIMSELF SOMEWHERE NOW!



IT WAS ON THAT DAY THAT THE FIGHTER WING DREW FIRST BLOOD FOR THE "SUPER", AS THEY CAME TO CALL HER. THEY LOCATED THREE FOCKE WULF CONDORS STALKING A DISTANT CONVOY - AND TWO SEAFIRE FLIGHTS WENT INTO THE ATTACK ...

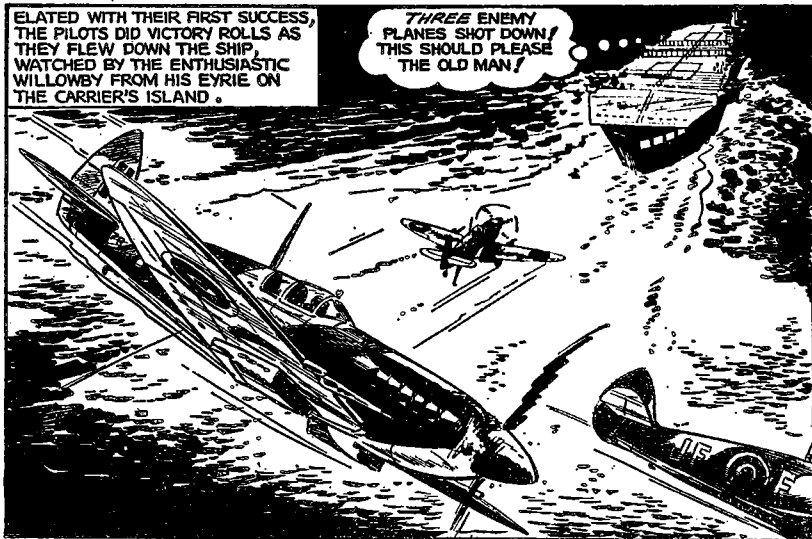
RED LEADER HERE ... FOLLOW ME IN TWO AND THREE! TALLY HO!





ELATED WITH THEIR FIRST SUCCESS, THE PILOTS DID VICTORY ROLLS AS THEY FLEW DOWN THE SHIP, WATCHED BY THE ENTHUSIASTIC WILLOWBY FROM HIS EYRIE ON THE CARRIER'S ISLAND.

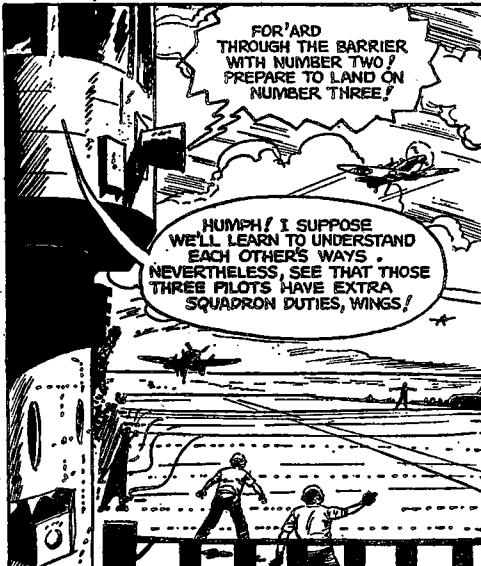
THREE ENEMY  
PLANES SHOT DOWN!  
THIS SHOULD PLEASE  
THE OLD MAN!



BUT THE CAPTAIN WAS FAR FROM PLEASED. HE ROARED FOR HIS COMMANDER FLYING...

WHAT IN BLUE PETER IS ALL THIS! THEY'RE LATE BACK FROM PATROL— AND WHAT DO THEY DO WHEN THEY RETURN? BALLY AEROBATICS!

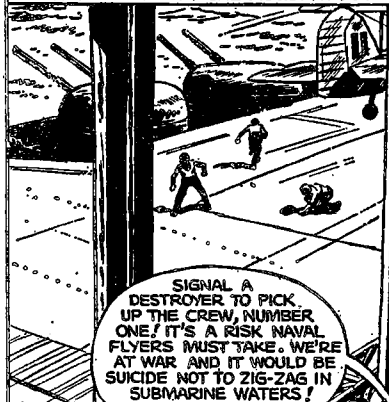
THEY'RE JUST SIGNALLING THEIR VICTORIES, SIR.



FOR'ARD THROUGH THE BARRIER WITH NUMBER TWO! PREPARE TO LAND ON NUMBER THREE!

HUMPH! I SUPPOSE WE'LL LEARN TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S WAYS. NEVERTHELESS, SEE THAT THOSE THREE PILOTS HAVE EXTRA SQUADRON DUTIES, WINGS!

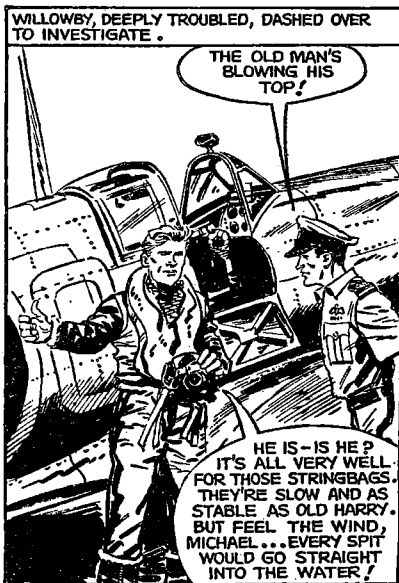
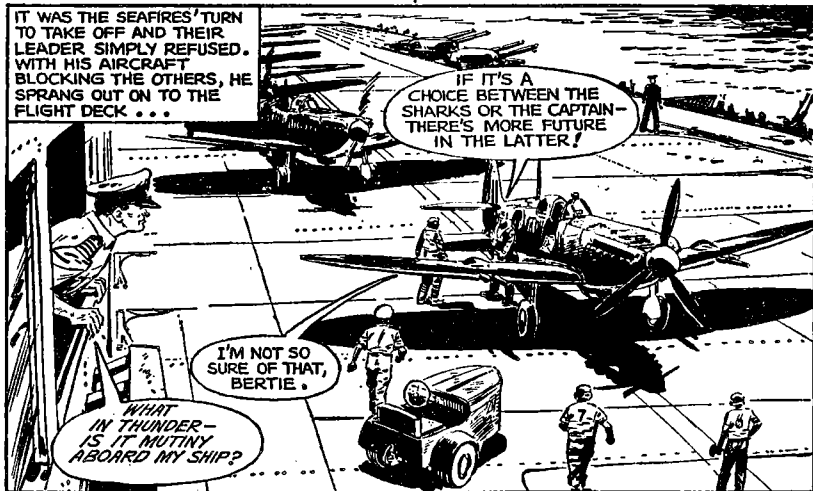
THAT WAS THE FIRST OF MANY REGRETTABLE MISUNDERSTANDINGS AS THEY SAILED INTO TROPICAL WATERS. FINALLY ONE DAY THE CAPTAIN REFUSED TO TURN FULLY INTO WIND FOR A FLY-OFF. THE SWORDFISH SOMEHOW GOT AWAY WITH ONLY ONE ACCIDENT...



SIGNAL A DESTROYER TO PICK UP THE CREW, NUMBER ONE! IT'S A RISK NAVAL FLYERS MUST TAKE. WE'RE AT WAR AND IT WOULD BE SUICIDE NOT TO ZIG-ZAG IN SUBMARINE WATERS!



ONE SWORDFISH IS IN THE SEA, SIR.



AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, BERTIE BREWSTER, THE OFFENDING PILOT, WAS ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING R.A.F. MEN STILL FLYING WITH THE FLEET . . .

I CONSIDER HE WAS JUSTIFIED, SIR!

WE WILL DISCUSS THAT LATER, COMMANDER. NOW, FLIGHT LIEUTENANT BREWSTER, THERE IS ONE THING I WILL *NOT* HAVE ON MY SHIP, AND THAT IS *MUTINY*! I SHALL RETURN YOU TO THE AIR FORCE AT TRINCOMALEE WITH MY REPORT. WHAT THEY DO WITH YOU WILL BE NO CONCERN OF MINE.



SO, EVENTUALLY, H.M.S. *INSUPERABLE* CAME TO SINHALESE WATERS. FLIGHT LIEUTENANT BREWSTER WAS WHISKED ASHORE, NEVER TO RETURN. WHILE THE CARRIER WAS REFITTED, HER PLANES ASSISTED WITH THE ISLAND'S SUBMARINE PATROLS.



THEN CAME THE CATALINA WITH ITS VITAL SIGHTING REPORT AND THE SIGNAL FROM THE NAVAL C-IN-C TO GO OUT AND MEET THE JAPANESE FORCE. AS THEY STEAMED INTO THE OPEN SEA, CAPTAIN GLANVILLE SENT FOR COMMANDER-FLYING.

WITH ANY OTHER BALLY SHIP WE'D SAIL TO MEET THE ENEMY, AND THAT'D BE THAT! BUT NOW WE HAVE TO HANG AROUND FLYING ON AIRCRAFT! COMMANDER WILLOWBY, WE LAND ON THE T.B.R.s., BUT WE'LL BE LEAVING THE FIGHTER SQUADRONS BEHIND. WE CANNOT AFFORD THE TIME.

BUT, SIR...



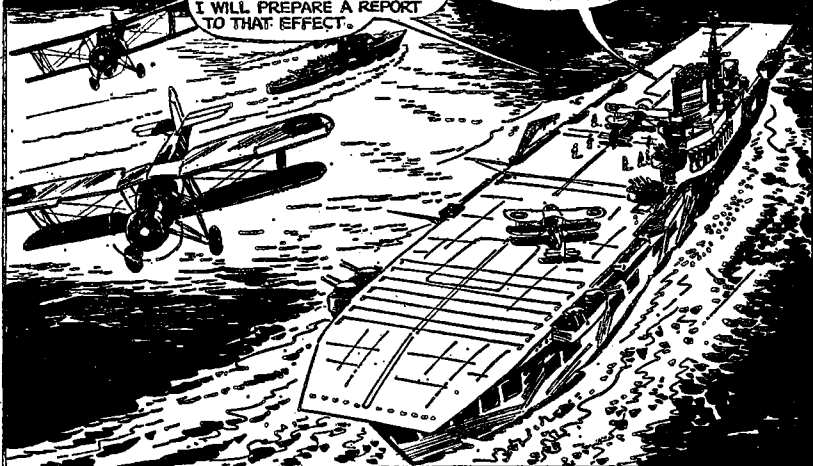
BUT, SIR - NOTHING! DO YOU REALISE WHICH WAY THE WIND'S BLOWING? FULL ASTERN ON OUR COURSE. IT MEANS STEAMING DIRECTLY AWAY FROM THE ENEMY WHILE WE LAND ON EACH SQUADRON. AS SOON AS THE LAST TORPEDO BOMBER IS ABOARD, WE TURN ABOUT!



MICHAEL WILLOWBY'S VOICE WAS ICY WITH SELF-CONTROL.

I AM AFRAID I TOTALLY DISAGREE WITH YOUR DECISION TO SAIL WITHOUT FIGHTERS, SIR. WITH YOUR PERMISSION, I WILL PREPARE A REPORT TO THAT EFFECT.

VERY WELL, WINGS! I APPRECIATE YOUR POSITION. BUT IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY. I AM CAPTAIN OF THIS SHIP.



THERE IS ONE OTHER THING, SIR. HERE IS THE NAME OF...OF...

WELL, MAN, WHAT IS IT? HERE, LET ME SEE...



THE REPLACEMENT FOR THE SWORDFISH PILOT— INJURED LANDING EARLIER IN THE SEA... SUB-LIEUTENANT (A) RICHARD GLANVILLE, R.N.V.R. YOUR SON, SIR!

DICK! HERE ON MY SHIP... AS A BRANCH PILOT? THEY COULD HAVE SPARED ME... THAT?



FOR CAPTAIN GLANVILLE IT WAS A LAST BITTER TRICK OF FORTUNE.

THERE WAS NO TIME FOR FATHER AND SON TO MEET. THERE WERE HOURS OF WORK LOADING UP THE SWORDFISH IN THE CROWDED HANGAR AND ARRANGING THEM AFT, WHICH COMMANDER - FLYING HAD TO SUPERVISE.

GLAD TO HAVE YOU ABOARD, DICK... BETTER LEAVE A FAMILY REUNION TILL LATER. WE'RE STILL NOT QUITE SHIP-SHAPE. YOU ALL SET?



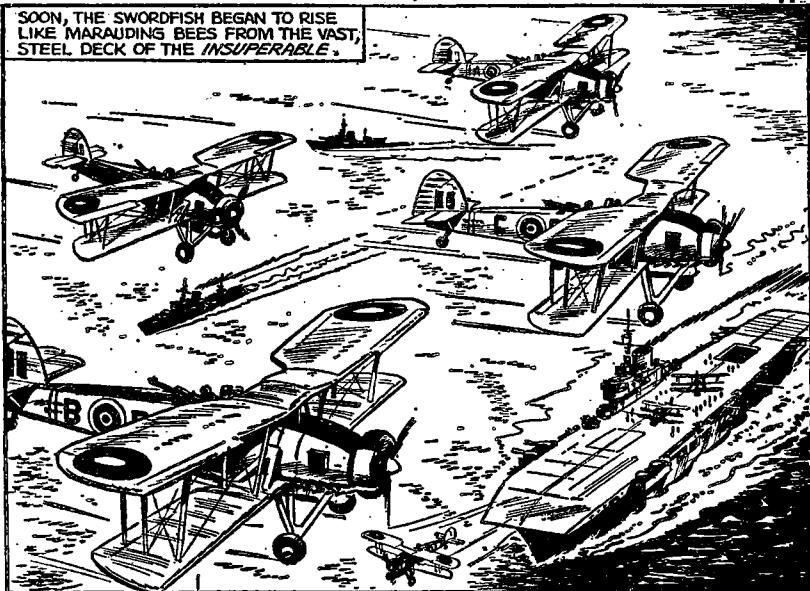
YES, THANK YOU, SIR. HOPE I DON'T LET THE OLD MAN DOWN. I HEAR HE'S NOT QUITE USED TO US CHAPS YET...



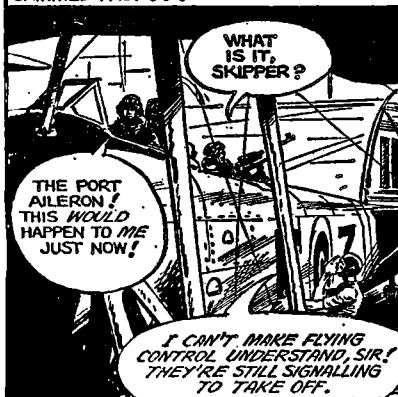
THAT'S THE UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE DAY! GOOD LUCK, DICK!

I'LL WARM HER UP FOR YOU, SIR.

SOON, THE SWORDFISH BEGAN TO RISE LIKE MARAUDING BEES FROM THE VAST, STEEL DECK OF THE *INSUPERABLE*.



THE LAST AIRCRAFT TO TAKE OFF WAS SUB-LIEUTENANT GLANVILLE'S... AND AS HE TESTED HIS CONTROLS, HE REALISED TO HIS HORROR THAT HIS PORT AILERON WAS JAMMED FAST...



DICK HURRIEDLY CLIMBED OUT AND RAN OVER TO THE SPEAKING TUBE ON THE ISLAND.



AT THAT MOMENT AN ANGRY CAPTAIN WAS STORMING UP TO COMMANDER-FLYING . . .

WHAT IN THUNDER IS THAT PILOT DOING ?

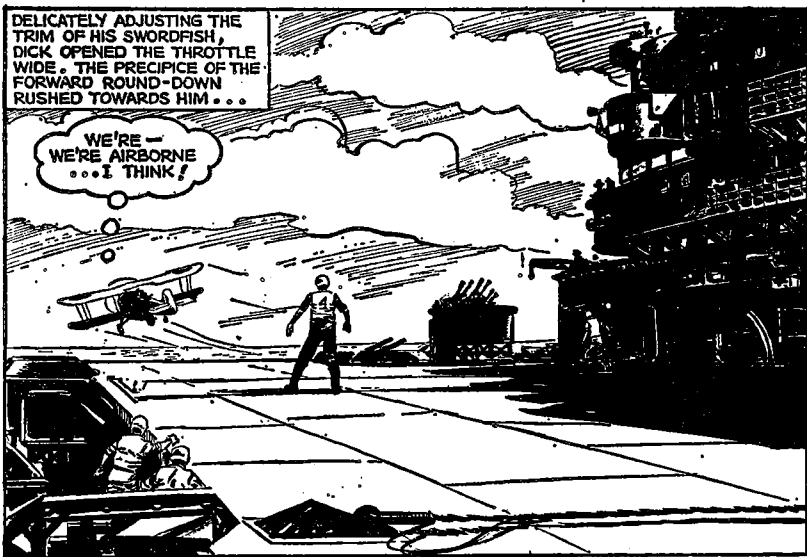
IT'S . . .  
ER . . . YOUR  
. . . IT'S  
SUB-LIEUTENANT  
GLANVILLE, SIR?  
HE SAYS . . .



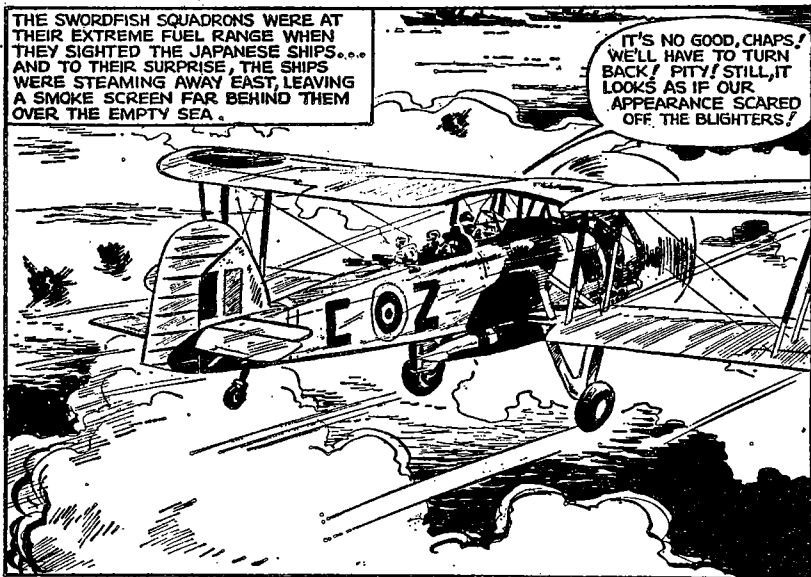
SUDDENLY THE CAPTAIN WAS OVERCOME WITH ANGER AND EXTREME EMBARRASSMENT AT THE THOUGHT THAT HIS OWN SON OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD DISGRACE THE SHIP . . .

I REFUSE TO HEAR ANOTHER WORD, D'YE HEAR!  
SWITCH ON THE  
TANNOY  
LOUDSPEAKERS !





## Strike Squadron



RELUCTANTLY THE PILOTS TURNED FOR HOME. IT WAS IN THE SUDDEN TURN, WITH THE TORPEDO STILL ABOARD, THAT DICK'S CONTROLS FAILED HIM. HE LOST SEVERAL HUNDRED FEET IN THE SWIRLING SMOKE CLOUD BEFORE HE COULD REGAIN CONTROL.

LOOK OUT!  
WE'RE NEARLY IN  
THE DRINK!



A SPLIT SECOND LATER, THE HEAVY PLANE WAS PLUNGING UNDER WATER. DESPERATELY DICK THUMPED AGAIN AND AGAIN AT THE RELEASE BUTTON OF HIS HARNESS...



HIS LUNGS FELT AS IF THEY WERE BURSTING - THEN SUDDENLY, THE HARNESS LOOSENEED, AND HE SHOT UPWARDS TO THE SURFACE...



IT WAS SOME TIME BEFORE THE SWORDFISH CREWS REALISED THAT ONE OF THEIR FORMATION WAS MISSING. BY THEN IT WAS TOO LATE FOR MORE THAN A HASTY SEARCH...

IT'S HOPELESS! THEY MUST HAVE GONE UNDER. OUR FUEL'S DANGEROUSLY LOW... WE'LL HAVE TO GET BACK, OR WE'LL ALL BE IN THE DRINK!

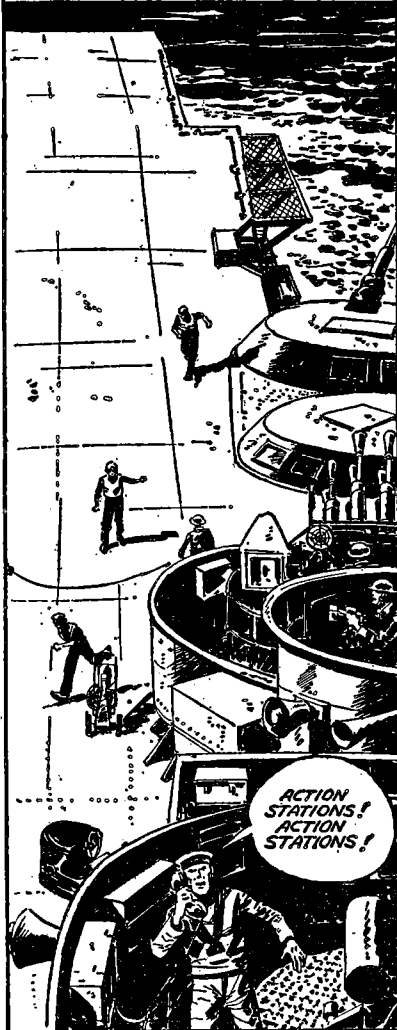
WITH HEAVY HEARTS, THEY SET COURSE AGAIN FOR THE SHIP.

BUT THEIR HEARTS WOULD HAVE BEEN HEAVIER STILL—HAD THEY REALISED THAT OVER THE HORIZON TO THE NORTH-EAST, A JAPANESE ADMIRAL IN HIS FLAGSHIP WAS FEELING ELATED...

HONORABLE ADMIRAL! CRUISER SQUADRON HAVE TURNED ABOUT AS ORDERED, SIR.

GOOD! CLEVER TO HAVE LET FORMER FLYING-BOAT ESCAPE AFTER ALL... BRITISH CARRIER NOW DRAWN FROM LAIR AND WITHOUT AIRCRAFT. OUR OWN AIR STRIKE WILL NOW GO IN TO DESTROY HER... BANZAI!

A LITTLE SHORT OF TWO HOURS LATER,  
THE THROBBING SILENCE ON THE DESERTED  
*INSUPERABLE* WAS SUDDENLY SHATTERED.

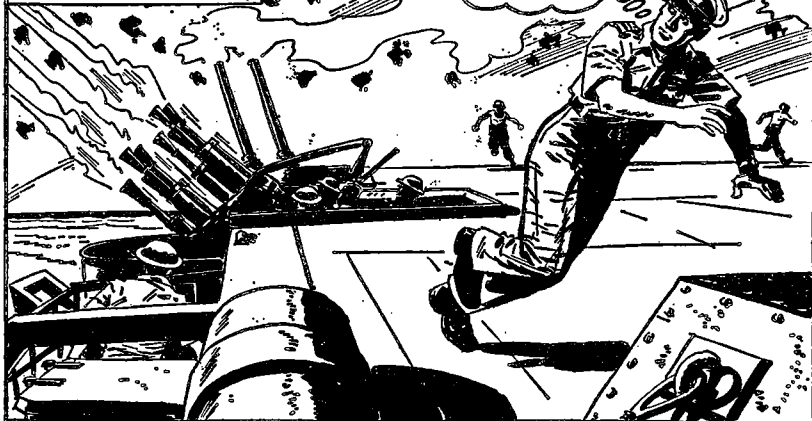


JAPANESE BOMBERS  
MADE THE FIRST  
STRIKE . . .



MICHAEL WILLOWBY WAS RACING ACROSS THE FLIGHT DECK WHEN HE HEARD THE FIRST BOMBS COME SCREAMING DOWN... HE FLUNG HIMSELF FLAT.

WE'VE HAD IT!  
THIS IS WHAT COMES  
OF NOT HAVING FIGHTER  
COVER!



IN A DAZE, OVERWHELMED  
WILL LOWBY AND WHEN HE  
OPENED HIS EYES SOME  
MINUTES LATER, HE  
STARED IN HORROR AT THE  
GHASTLY SIGHT BESIDE HIM.  
SLOWLY THE VOICE ON THE  
TANNOY PENETRATED HIS  
CONSCIOUSNESS.

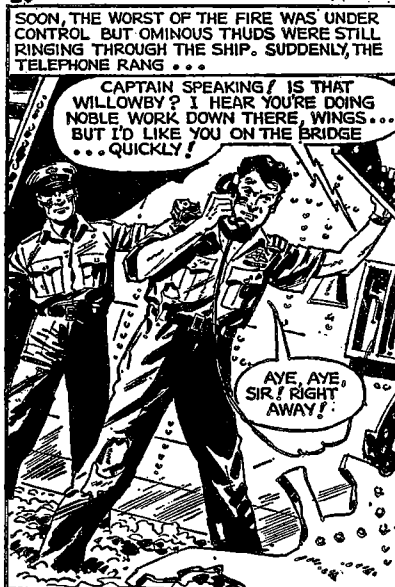
CALLING DAMAGE CONTROL  
PARTIES! FIRE IN THE HANGAR  
AFT! WILL SOMEONE FIND  
COMMANDER-FLYING ...  
REPEAT...

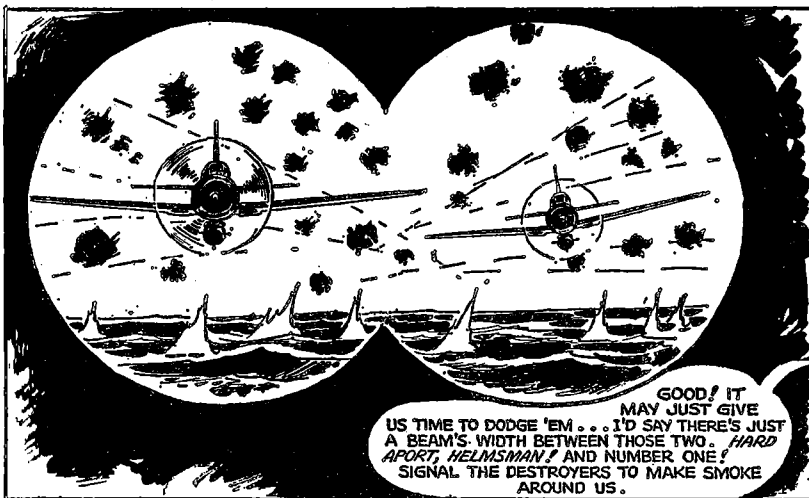
WHERE  
AM I? OH MERCIFUL  
STARS! POOR  
BLIGHTERS!

FIRE IN THE HANGAR AFT...THE  
PLACE MUST BE REEKING WITH  
PETROL FUMES! MICHAEL  
SCRAMBLED TO HIS FEET AND  
CLATTERED DOWN A LADDER TO  
THE HANGAR DECK. THE AFTER  
END WAS AN INFERNO...

THE SPRINKLERS -- GET  
THE SPRINKLERS GOING!  
AND BRING THE LIFT DOWN  
-- TO GET THE FLAMES  
OUT!





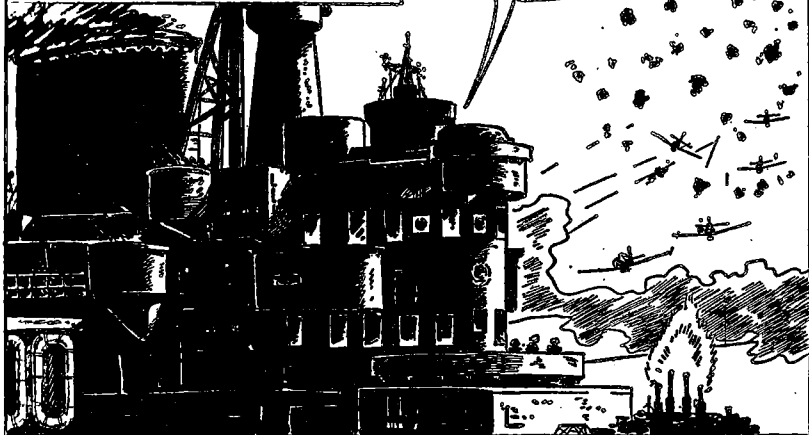


THE BULKHEADS GROANED AS THE CARRIER HEAVED HER THIRTY-THOUSAND-TON STEEL HULL ROUND UNDER THE SHORT REIN OF THE HELMSMAN... EVEN AS THE SHADOW OF ONE OF THE BOMBERS LEAPED ACROSS THE DECK.

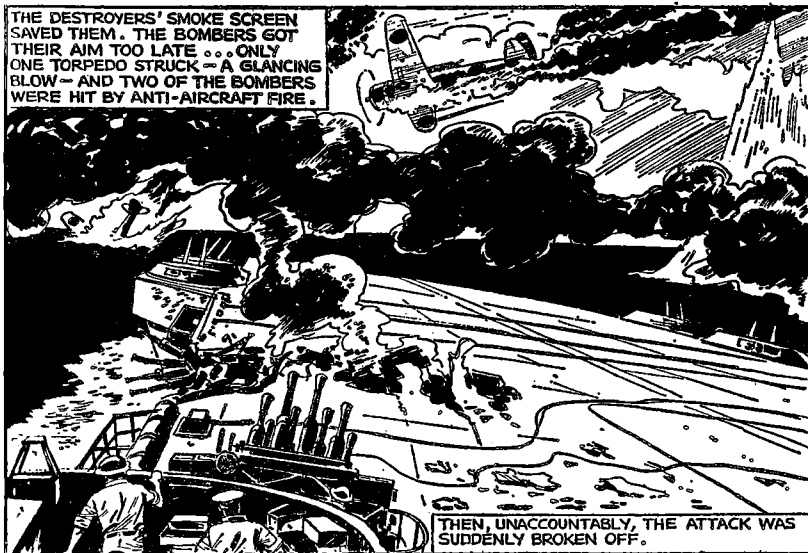


THEY WERE NEARLY THROWN OFF THEIR FEET AS THE SHIP AGAIN VIOLENTLY HEELED OVER AND ONCE MORE, THE TORPEDO TRAILS SPED JUST CLEAR. THE NEXT ATTACK WAS FROM FULL ASTERN . . .

LOOK OUT!  
FULL ASTERN!  
FIVE OF THEM!



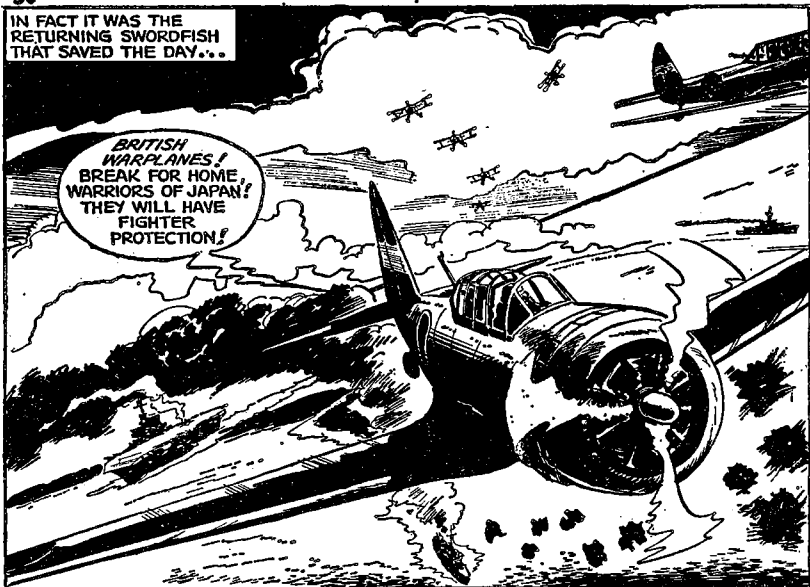
THE DESTROYERS' SMOKE SCREEN SAVED THEM. THE BOMBERS GOT THEIR AIM TOO LATE . . . ONLY ONE TORPEDO STRUCK — A GLANCING BLOW — AND TWO OF THE BOMBERS WERE HIT BY ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE.



THEN, UNACCOUNTABLY, THE ATTACK WAS SUDDENLY BROKEN OFF.

IN FACT IT WAS THE  
RETURNING SWORDFISH  
THAT SAVED THE DAY...

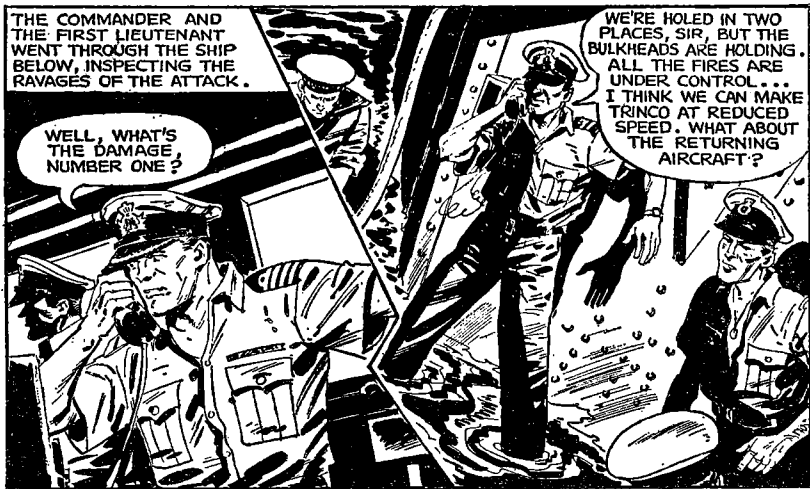
BRITISH  
WARPLANES!  
BREAK FOR HOME,  
WARRIORS OF JAPAN!  
THEY WILL HAVE  
FIGHTER  
PROTECTION!



THE COMMANDER AND  
THE FIRST LIEUTENANT  
WENT THROUGH THE SHIP  
BELOW, INSPECTING THE  
RAVAGES OF THE ATTACK.

WELL, WHAT'S  
THE DAMAGE,  
NUMBER ONE?

WE'RE HOLED IN TWO  
PLACES, SIR, BUT THE  
BULKHEADS ARE HOLDING.  
ALL THE FIRES ARE  
UNDER CONTROL...  
I THINK WE CAN MAKE  
TRINCO AT REDUCED  
SPEED. WHAT ABOUT  
THE RETURNING  
AIRCRAFT?



ALFRAIN GLANVILLE AND  
WILLOWBY WATCHED THE  
WORDFISH FLY DOWN THE SHIP  
LOOKING FOR THEIR SIGNAL.

WOW! THEY'RE IN  
A ROTTEN MESS! WE'VE  
MISSED A PACKET!

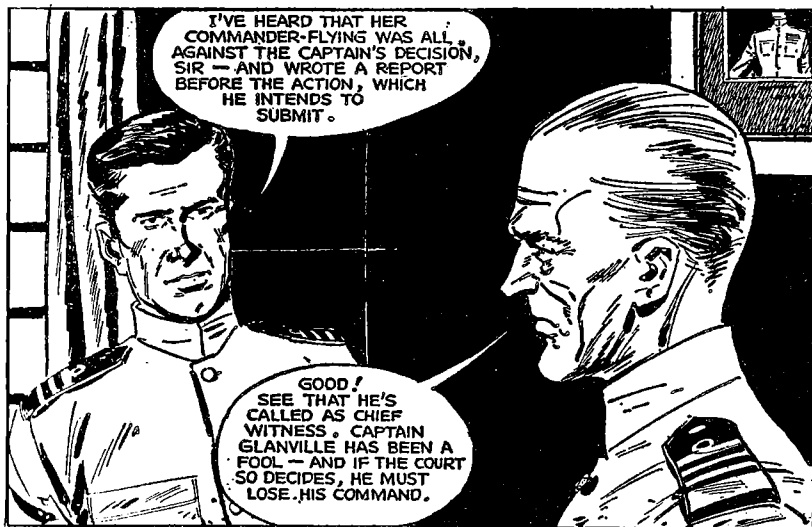
WOULD  
YOU RATHER  
WE DITCHED  
THE AIRCRAFT,  
SIR?

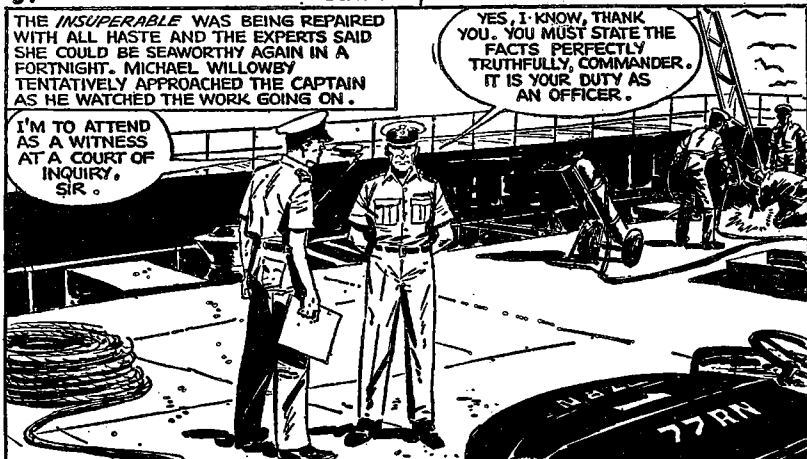
IT'S MY FAULT,  
WINGS, NOT THEIRS! IF  
YOUR MEN CAN LAND ON  
ALL THIS, WE'LL TAKE 'EM  
ABOARD. I CAN TRIM  
THE LIST A BIT.





## Chapter 3. *Evasive Action*



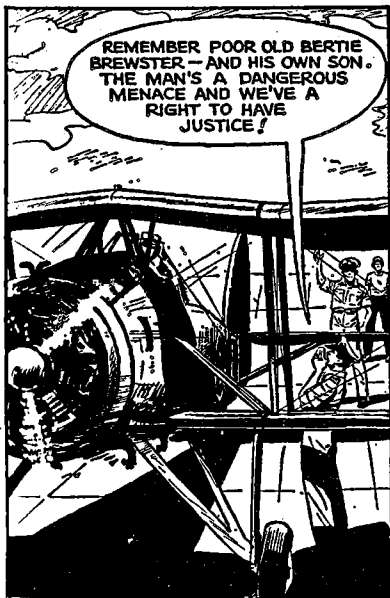


THE SHIP'S SQUADRONS WERE ASHORE ON TRINCOMALEE'S AIRSTRIP... FROM THERE, MICHAEL WILLOWBY WAS GOING TO FLY HIMSELF OVER TO THE COURT IN ONE OF THE SWORDFISH. THE AIR CREWS SAW HIM OFF WITH THEIR ENCOURAGEMENTS.

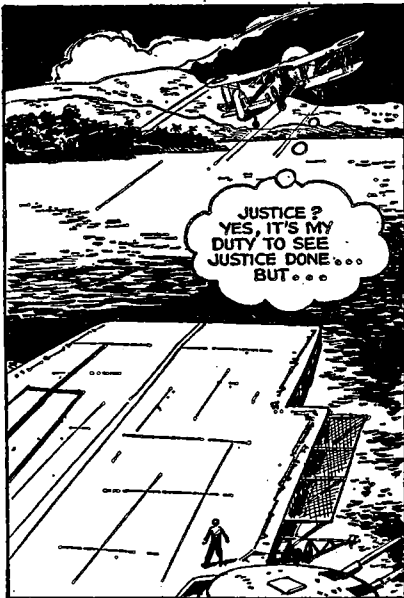
GOOD RIDDANCE TO THE OLD MAN! NOW'S YOUR CHANCE, WINGS... TELL THEM EVERYTHING AND DON'T PULL YOUR PUNCHES!



REMEMBER POOR OLD BERTIE BREWSTER—AND HIS OWN SON. THE MAN'S A DANGEROUS MENACE AND WE'VE A RIGHT TO HAVE JUSTICE!



JUSTICE? YES, IT'S MY DUTY TO SEE JUSTICE DONE... BUT...









SUDDENLY THERE CAME AN INTERRUPTION. A NAVAL DISPATCH RIDER HAD JUST DELIVERED A SIGNAL TO THE ADMIRAL OUTSIDE THE NAVAL H.Q. CLOSE BY.



IN A FEW MINUTES, THE COURT ROOM WAS TRANSFERRED INTO A SCENE OF URGENT CONFERENCE...

GENTLEMEN! I HAVE JUST RECEIVED A WIRELESS SIGNAL FROM THE R.A.F. OUTPOST AT KRUMZI ATOLL. THE JAP FLEET HAS PUT BACK TO REFUEL AT NIAS OFF SUMATRA, AND WITH THE INSUPERABLE APPARENTLY OUT OF ACTION, THEY BELIEVE NOTHING ELSE CAN INTERFERE WITH THEM. THEY'LL BE THERE FOR THIRTY-SIX HOURS.





MY COMMANDER-FLYING AND I SEEM TO HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER AND I HAVE A PERSONAL SCORE TO SETTLE... I AM PREPARED TO ACCEPT YOUR INSTRUCTIONS AND ADVICE TO THE LETTER.



I'M GLAD! ANY PARTICULAR QUESTIONS WHILE WE WAIT FOR THE CHARTS?

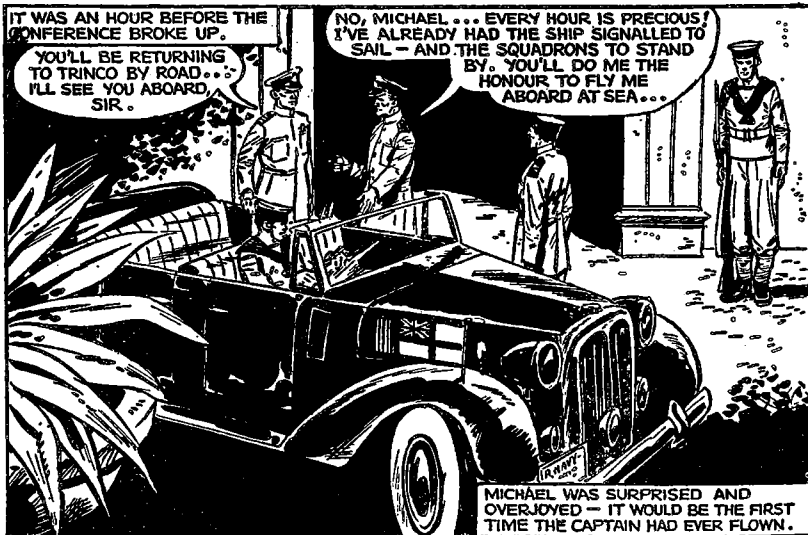
YES, SIR! CAN YOU TELL ME ANYTHING MORE ABOUT THIS KRUMZI ATOLL?



MICHAEL WAS SLIGHTLY PUZZLED. THE ATOLL DID NOT SEEM VERY IMPORTANT... BUT THIS WAS SOMETHING ELSE HE WAS TO LEARN IN TIME.

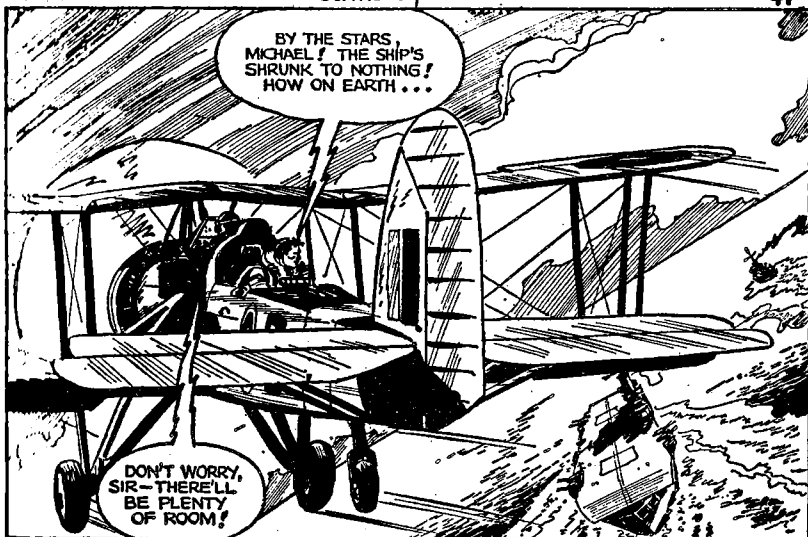
IT WAS AN HOUR BEFORE THE CONFERENCE BROKE UP.

YOU'LL BE RETURNING TO TRINCO BY ROAD... I'LL SEE YOU ABOARD, SIR.



NO, MICHAEL... EVERY HOUR IS PRECIOUS! I'VE ALREADY HAD THE SHIP SIGNALLED TO SAIL - AND THE SQUADRONS TO STAND BY. YOU'LL DO ME THE HONOUR TO FLY ME ABOARD AT SEA...

MICHAEL WAS SURPRISED AND OVERJOYED - IT WOULD BE THE FIRST TIME THE CAPTAIN HAD EVER FLOWN.



WELL OUT AT SEA, WITH ALL THE SQUADRONS ABOARD, THE CAPTAIN AND HIS COMMANDER-FLYING HELD A GENERAL BRIEFING IN THE WARDROOM.



GENTLEMEN, THIS IS OUR FIRST OPERATIONAL STRIKE. I WILL NOT FAIL YOU — AND I KNOW YOU WILL NOT FAIL THE SHIP! THE FIGHTER SQUADRONS WILL COVER THE TORPEDO STRIKE AND—LISTEN CAREFULLY— AFTER THE STRIKE—NONE OF YOU WILL RETURN TO THE SHIP! INSTEAD, YOU WILL FLY ACROSS TO KRUNZLI ATOLL!

WILLOWBY LOOKED AT HIS CAPTAIN WITH CONCERN . . .



BUT WHAT ABOUT THE SHIP, SIR? THE JAPS ARE BOUND TO SEND OUT A COUNTER STRIKE AGAINST HER AFTERWARDS.

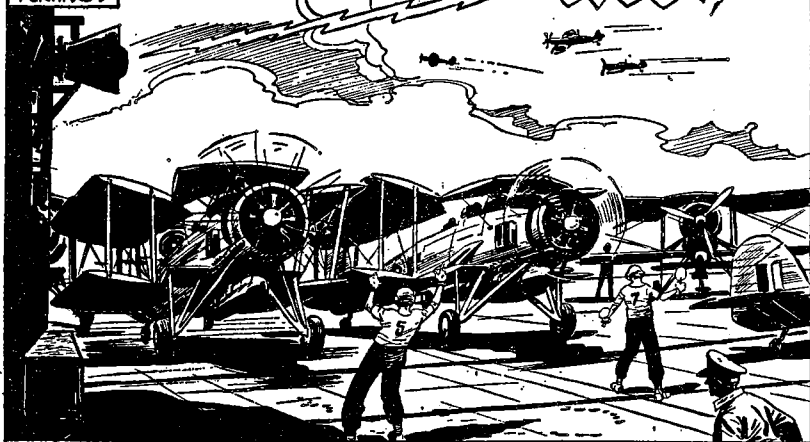
THE SHIP, MICHAEL? WE'LL LOOK AFTER OURSELVES AS WE DID BEFORE. YOU SEE, IT'S IN BOTH OUR INTERESTS THAT YOU *DON'T* RETURN. WE'LL BE DODGING ABOUT IN THE HOPES THAT THEY WON'T FIND US AND IF WE GAVE YOU A HOMING POSITION THE JAPS WOULD BE DOWN ON US — AND WE'D ALL CATCH A PACKET!



## Strike Squadron

FINAL BRIEFINGS TOOK PLACE AND THE AIRCRAFT WERE RANGED AFT. THEN IT WAS DAWN AND TIME FOR TAKE-OFF. THE CAPTAIN GAVE HIS FINAL WORDS OVER THE LOUDSPEAKER AS THE FIRST SWORDFISH CARRYING MICHAEL WILLOWBY ROLLED FORWARD.

REMEMBER, WE WILL NOT CONTACT YOU AGAIN. BUT SEND US ONE SIGNAL, ONE SIGNAL ONLY— THAT OF VICTORY! GOODBYE AND GOOD LUCK!



FROM THE WING-BRIDGE CAPTAIN GLANVILLE WATCHED THE PLANES DISAPPEAR TOWARDS THE RISING SUN. THE SHIP SEEMED STRANGELY EMPTY AND VULNERABLE WITHOUT THEM.

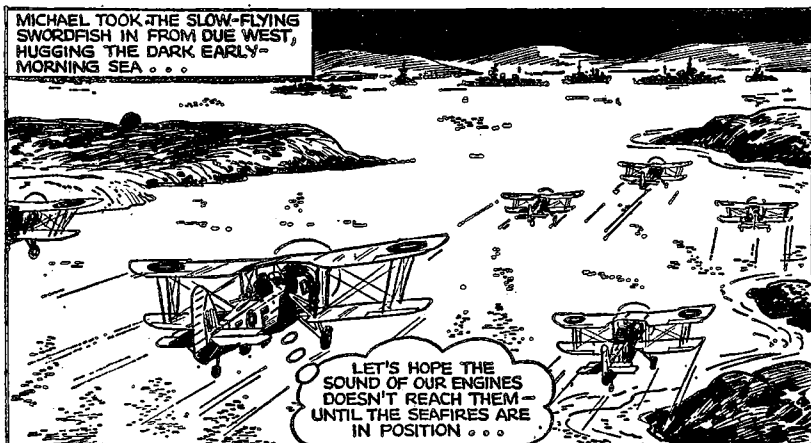


FIGHTERS AND TORPEDO-BOMBERS AIRBORNE, SIR!

THANK YOU, NUMBER ONE. ALTER COURSE — ONE-TWO-EIGHT!

## Chapter 4 VITAL EVIDENCE

MICHAEL TOOK THE SLOW-FLYING SWORDFISH IN FROM DUE WEST, HUGGING THE DARK EARLY-MORNING SEA . . .



THE FASTER SEAFIRES HAD SWEEPED ROUND, EQUALLY LOW AND WERE HURTLING IN FROM THE SOUTH-EAST . . . SUDDENLY, AND APPARENTLY FROM NOWHERE, THEY ROARED ACROSS THE END OF THE ANCHORAGE AND THERE WAS PANDEMONIUM ABOARD THE SURPRISED JAP SHIPS . . .

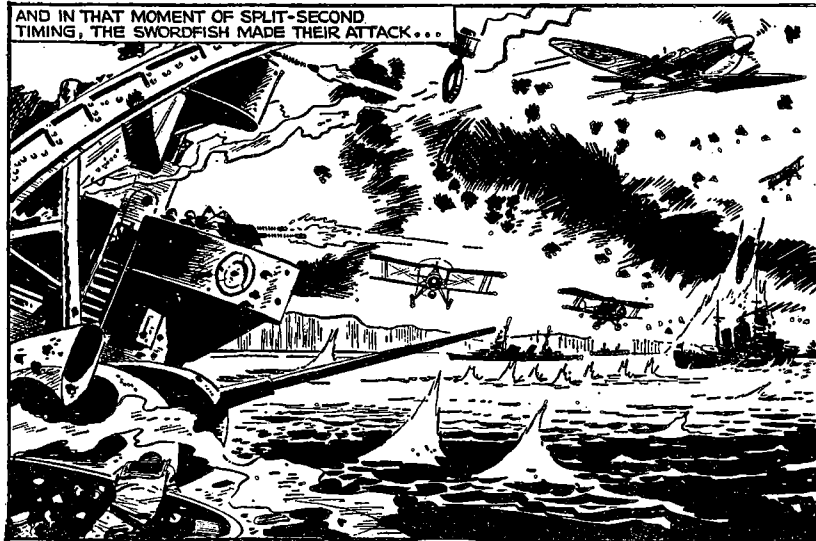


AS THE JAPANESE SAILORS SCRAMBLED TO THEIR GUNS, ALL EYES WERE ON THE MARAUDING SEAFIRES... AND THAT WAS EXACTLY WHAT MICHAEL HAD PLANNED.

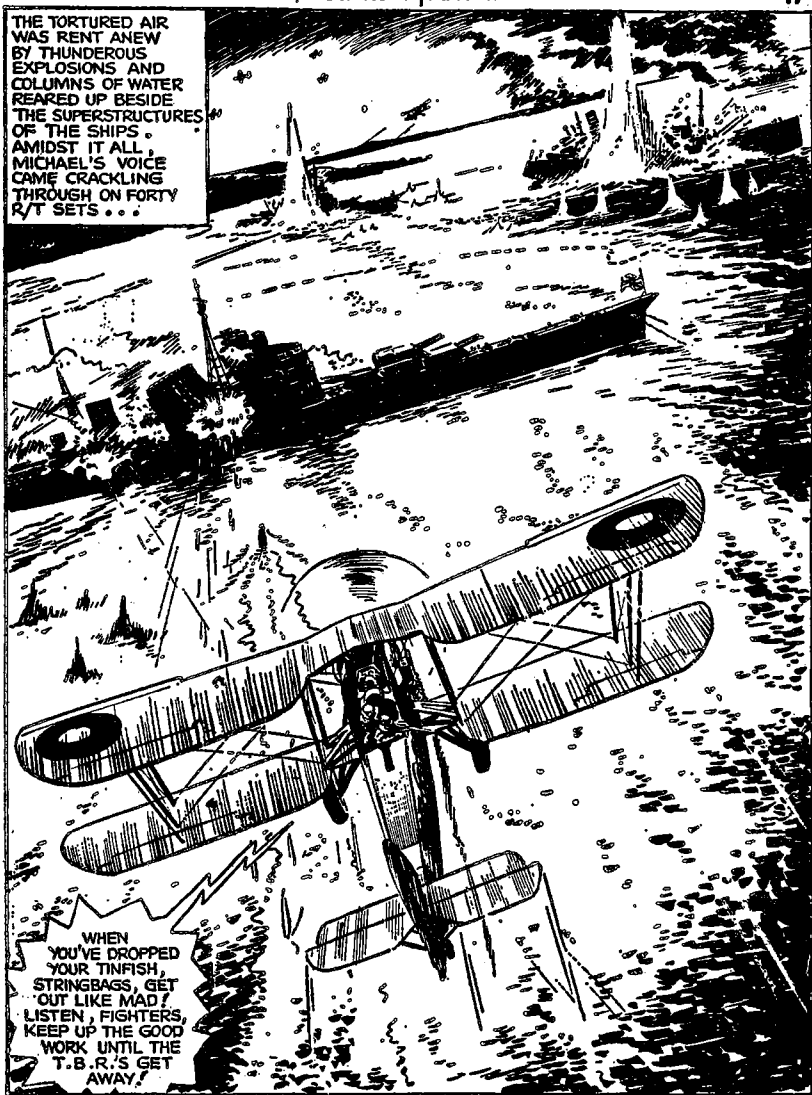
GREEN LEADER  
HERE! DRAW THEIR  
FIRE THIS WAY!



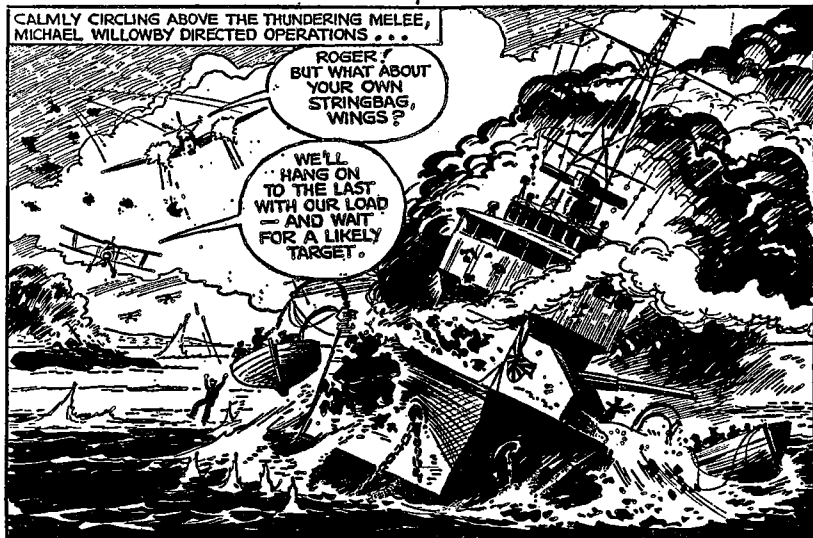
AND IN THAT MOMENT OF SPLIT-SECOND TIMING, THE SWORDFISH MADE THEIR ATTACK...



THE TORTURED AIR  
WAS RENT ANEW  
BY THUNDEROUS  
EXPLOSIONS AND  
COLUMNS OF WATER  
REARED UP BESIDE  
THE SUPERSTRUCTURES  
OF THE SHIPS.  
AMIDST IT ALL,  
MICHAEL'S VOICE  
CAME CRACKLING  
THROUGH ON FORTY  
R/T SETS . . .



WHEN  
YOU'VE DROPPED  
YOUR TINFISH,  
STRINGBAGS, GET  
OUT LIKE MAD!  
LISTEN, FIGHTERS,  
KEEP UP THE GOOD  
WORK UNTIL THE  
T.B.R.'S GET  
AWAY.



IT WAS CAPTAIN GLANVILLE'S SON AND HIS CREW, SUNBURNED AND EMACIATED, BUT OTHERWISE IN GOOD HEALTH. THEY WERE BROUGHT BEFORE AN OVERJOYED CAPTAIN.

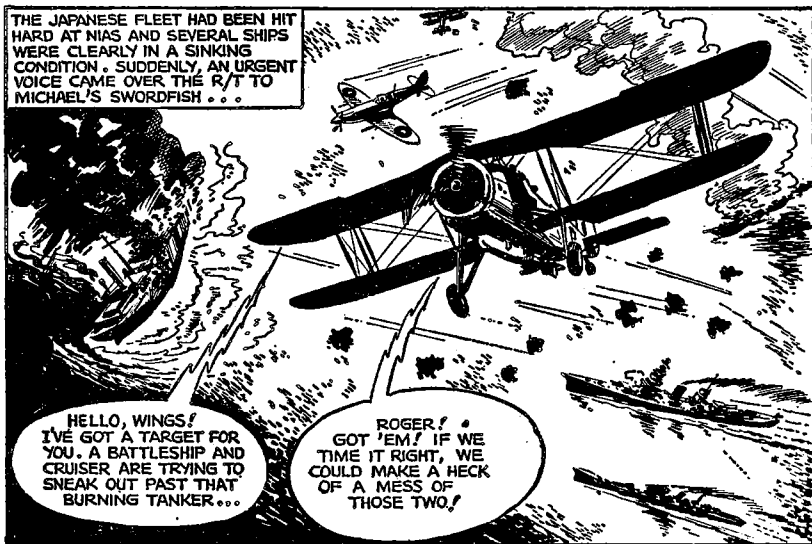
DICK!  
MY BOY...  
AND YOU  
OTHER  
TWO?

HELLO,  
FATHER...SIR!  
GOOD TO BE  
HOME!

AYE, SIR! IT'S  
A GOOD OMEN! THE  
STRIKE SHOULD  
JUST ABOUT BE  
GOING IN NOW...I'LL  
HAVE FIGHTER-CONTROL  
RELAYED TO THE  
BRIDGE.

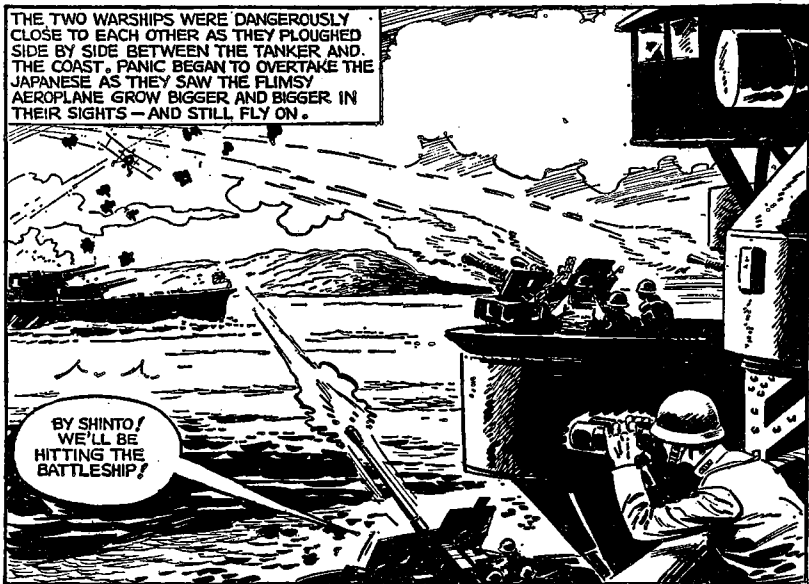


THE JAPANESE FLEET HAD BEEN HIT HARD AT NAS AND SEVERAL SHIPS WERE CLEARLY IN A SINKING CONDITION. SUDDENLY, AN URGENT VOICE CAME OVER THE R/T TO MICHAEL'S SWORDFISH...



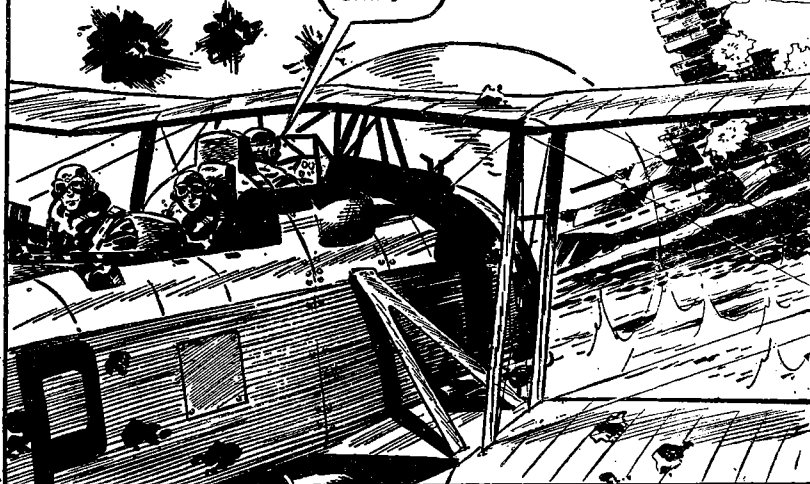
HELLO, WINGS!  
I'VE GOT A TARGET FOR  
YOU. A BATTLESHIP AND  
CRUISER ARE TRYING TO  
SNEAK OUT PAST THAT  
BURNING TANKER...

ROGER!  
GOT 'EM! IF WE  
TIME IT RIGHT, WE  
COULD MAKE A HECK  
OF A MESS OF  
THOSE TWO!



THE GREAT MASS OF THE BATTLESHIP WAS LOOMING BEFORE THE SWORDFISH— AND STILL MICHAEL HELD OFF THE RELEASE BUTTON.

TORPEDO  
GONE!



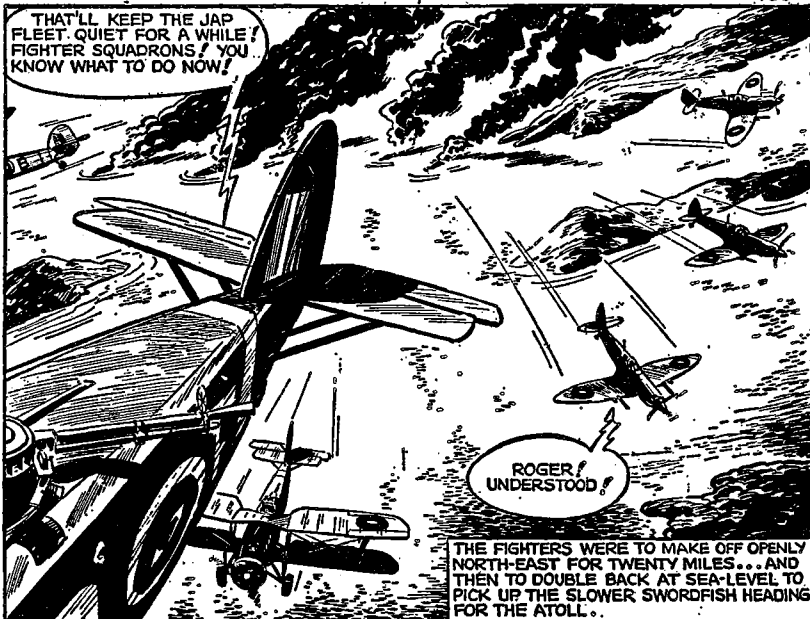
THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION AS THE TORPEDO DETONATED ON THE BATTLESHIP'S WATER-LINE, SIMULTANEOUSLY IGNITING TONS OF FLOATING OIL FROM THE BURNING TANKER...



A RAGING FIRE SWEEPED THE DECKS, SETTING OFF THE OVERHEATED AMMUNITION AND FUEL.

THE TORPEDO HAD STRUCK CLOSE TO THE SHIP'S RUDDERS AND SHE VEERED OUT OF CONTROL TO PORT AND SMASHED INTO THE HULL OF THE CRUISER. THE TWO HAPLESS WARSHIPS WERE LOCKED IN AN EMBRACE OF DEATH—AS SHELLS AND METAL TORE THEIR WAY ABOUT THE FIRE-RAVAGED DECKS.





## Chapter 5. SUICIDE ATTACKS



MICHAEL WILLOWBY STRIPPED OFF HIS HELMET AND GOGGLES REVEALING HIS FACE — AND THEIR BEARDED HOST SUDDENLY STARED AT HIM IN AMAZEMENT.

MICHAEL!  
IT'S YOU!

FOR PETE'S SAKE!  
IT COULDN'T BE! BEHIND  
ALL THAT BEARD — BERTIE  
BREWSTER!



IT WAS A HAPPY REUNION INDEED. THEY, OF COURSE TOLD BERTIE EVERYTHING, NOT FORGETTING THE CAPTAIN'S NEW ROLE IN IT ALL. THEN THEY IN TURN WANTED TO KNOW ALL ABOUT THE OUTCAST.

FUNNILY ENOUGH, YOU KNOW, I ONCE LIVED IN JAPAN AND I SPEAK JAPANESE. THAT'S ONE REASON WHY THEY DUMPED ME HERE. QUIET NOW... WE MAY PICK UP NEWS OF WHETHER THEY'RE AFTER THE SHIP OR NOT.



IT WAS A SOBERING THOUGHT. THEY BECAME SILENT AND CROWDED ROUND THE WIRELESS SET.



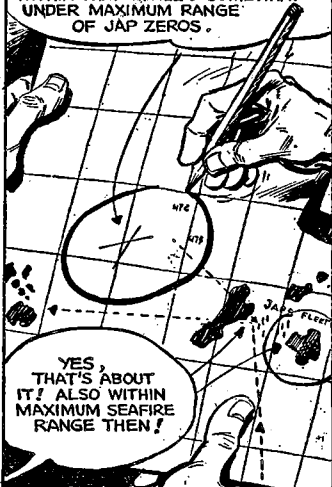
BERTIE HEARD THE SIGNAL FOR SUICIDE VOLUNTEERS - IT WAS A GRIM PROSPECT FOR THEIR OLD SHIP. MICHAEL TOOK THE SENIOR SWORDFISH OBSERVER ASIDE . . .

HOW FAR AWAY WILL THE SUPER BE NOW, DO YOU THINK?

DIFFICULT TO SAY, WINGS. SHE'LL BE ALTERING COURSE ALL OVER THE PLACE, NO DOUBT. LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT OUR CHARTS!



ASSUMING AN OBVIOUS GENERAL DIRECTION OF RETREAT - IT'S A FAIR CALCULATION SHE'S WITHIN THAT CIRCLE. SOMEWHAT UNDER MAXIMUM RANGE OF JAP ZEROS.



MICHAEL RETURNED TO THE OTHERS, A LOOK OF GRIM DETERMINATION ON HIS FACE.

ABOUT THE SHIP . . . WHATEVER HE DID BEFORE, THE CAPTAIN HAS NOW RISKED HER TO ENSURE OUR SURVIVAL. SHE'S IN GRAVE DANGER AND NEEDS HELP. I PROPOSE TO FLY A SEAFIRE AFTER HER. BUT NO-ONE NEED COME WHO DOESN'T WANT TO.

WE'RE WITH YOU, WINGS!

YOU'RE NOT LEAVING US BEHIND!



MICHAEL FOUND DIFFICULTY IN TELLING ONE OF THEM—ONE WHO HAD BEEN SLIGHTLY WOUNDED—TO HAND HIS PLANE OVER TO HIM.

WE SHAN'T BE ABLE TO RISK A WORD OVER THE R/T. AND I WARN YOU THAT WE MAY POSSIBLY NEVER FIND THE *SUPER* BEFORE OUR PETROL RUNS OUT.

WE KNOW THE ODDS, WINGS! BUT WE'LL FIND HER SOMEHOW...

THE SEAFIRES WERE REFUELLED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, AND IN A SHORT TIME, THE FIRST OF THEM WAS CLIMBING INTO THE SKY. MICHAEL TOOK OFF LAST.

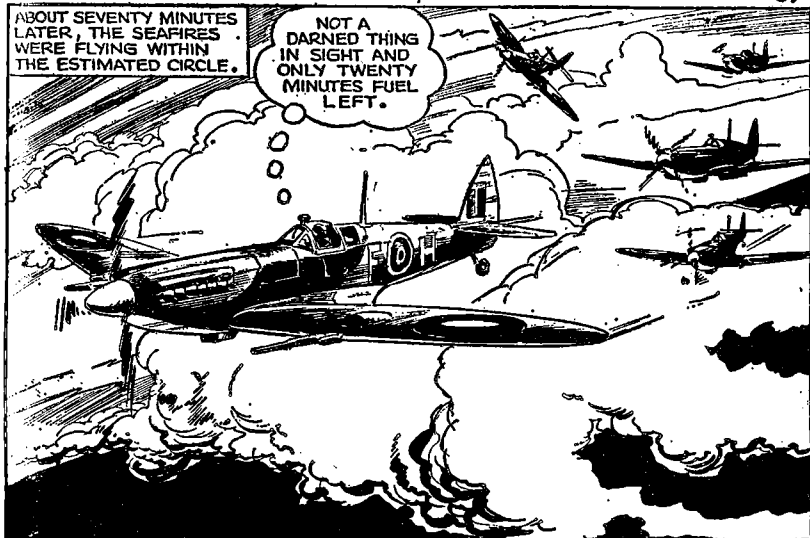
CHEERIO, SIR! GIVE MY LOVE TO THE SHIP.

AND YOU BET I'LL TELL THE OLD MAN ABOUT YOU. BE SEEING YOU, BERTIE, AND GOOD LUCK!



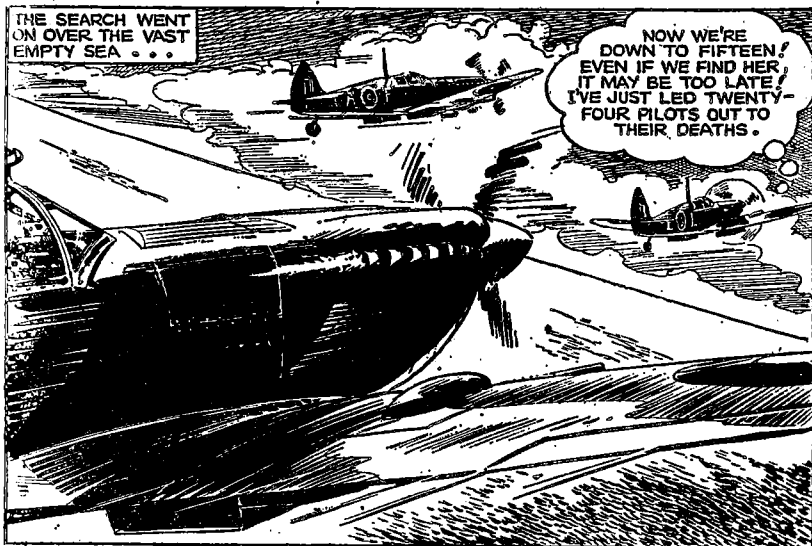
ABOUT SEVENTY MINUTES LATER, THE SEAFIRES WERE FLYING WITHIN THE ESTIMATED CIRCLE.

NOT A DARNED THING IN SIGHT AND ONLY TWENTY MINUTES FUEL LEFT.



THE SEARCH WENT ON OVER THE VAST EMPTY SEA . . .

NOW WE'RE DOWN TO FIFTEEN! EVEN IF WE FIND HER, IT MAY BE TOO LATE! I'VE JUST LED TWENTY-FOUR PILOTS OUT TO THEIR DEATHS.

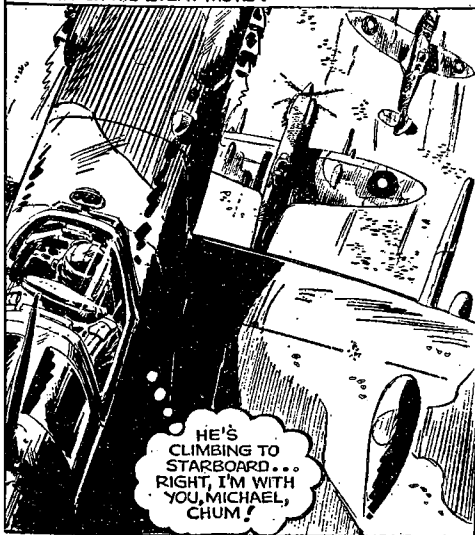


THEN, SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A CRACKLING ON THE R/T, AND A VOICE CAME THROUGH QUITE CLEARLY. THEY ALL HEARD IT.



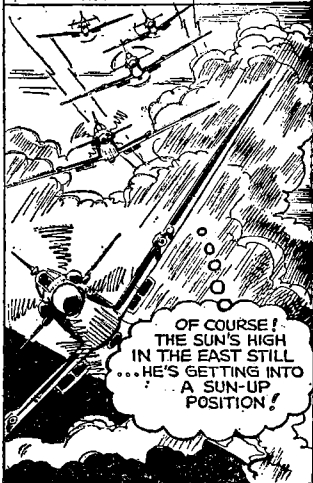
BERTIE HERE, CHAPS / DON'T REPLY! THE JAP ZEROS HAVE BEEN TALKING TO BASE, RADIOING THEIR POSITION. THEY'RE SEARCHING FOR THE SHIP NOW, PROBABLY NOT FAR FROM YOU. HERE'S THEIR POSITION...

THEY ALL HEARD BERTIE GIVE THE POSITION. THEN THEY LOOKED OVER AT THEIR LEADER'S SEAFIRE—TO WATCH HIS EVERY MOVE.



HE'S CLIMBING TO STARBOARD... RIGHT, I'M WITH YOU, MICHAEL, CHUM!

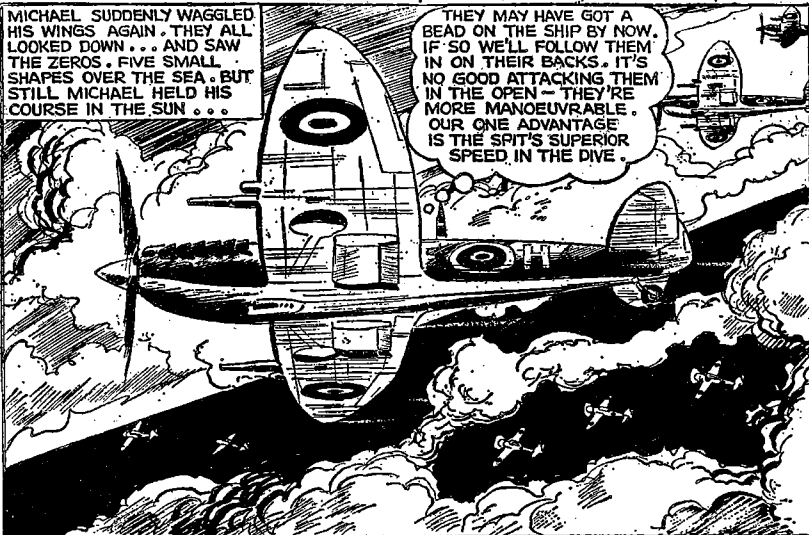
MICHAEL SET A NEW COURSE AND STARTED TO CLIMB. AT FIRST THEY BEGAN TO WONDER WHY HE WAS INTENT ON GAINING SO MUCH ALTITUDE. THEN IT DAWNED ON THEM.



OF COURSE! THE SUN'S HIGH IN THE EAST STILL... HE'S GETTING INTO A SUN-UP POSITION!

MICHAEL SUDDENLY WAGGLED HIS WINGS AGAIN. THEY ALL LOOKED DOWN... AND SAW THE ZEROS. FIVE SMALL SHAPES OVER THE SEA. BUT STILL MICHAEL HELD HIS COURSE IN THE SUN...

THEY MAY HAVE GOT A BEAD ON THE SHIP BY NOW. IF SO WE'LL FOLLOW THEM IN ON THEIR BACKS. IT'S NO GOOD ATTACKING THEM IN THE OPEN - THEY'RE MORE MANOEUVRABLE. OUR ONE ADVANTAGE IS THE SPIT'S SUPERIOR SPEED IN THE DIVE.



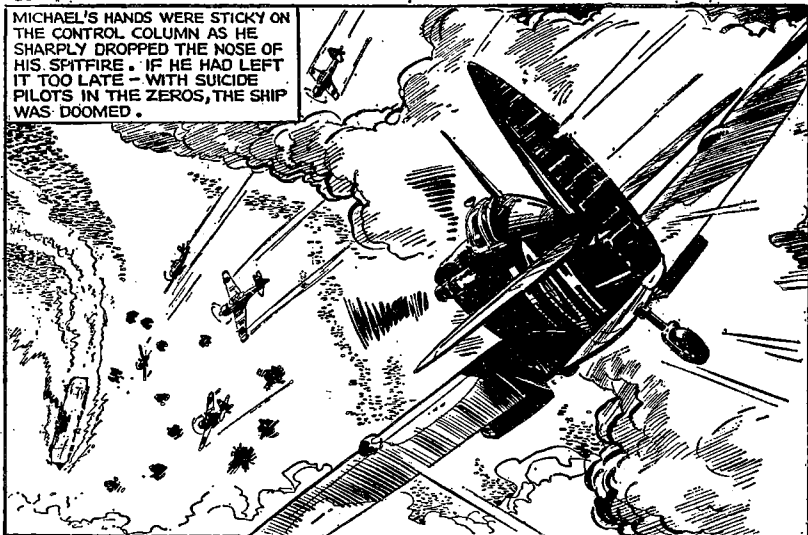
ON THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER, THE SWIFTLY APPROACHING PLANES HAD JUST BEEN PICKED UP ON THE RADAR. THE GUNNERS WERE ALERTED AND EVERY EYE WAS DESPERATELY SEARCHING THE SUN-BLINDING SKY.

WE'LL NEVER SEE THEM COMING OUT OF THE SUN! HOW MANY DID YOU SAY WERE LOCATED? ABOUT THIRTY! PHEW! WE'RE FOR IT!

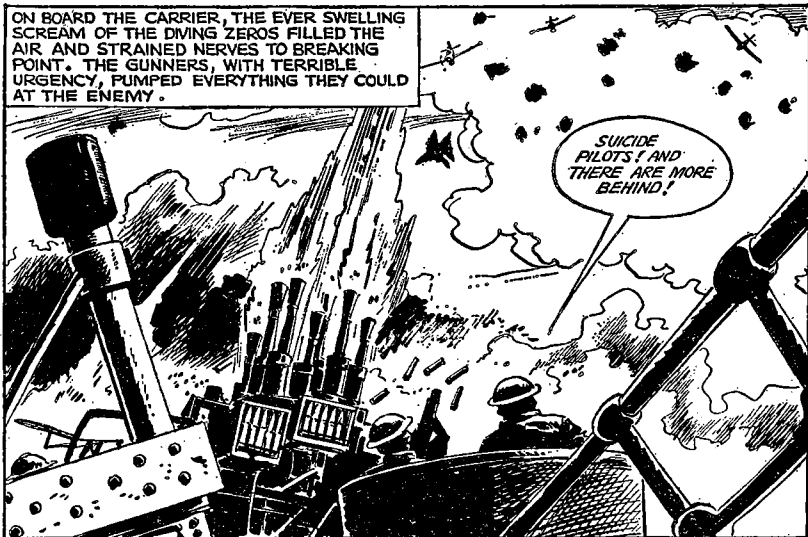


THEY WOULD HAVE FELT RATHER BETTER, HAD THEY KNOWN THAT TWENTY-FOUR OF THOSE WERE THE PURSUING SEAFIRES, WHO DARED NOT GIVE AWAY THEIR PRESENCE.

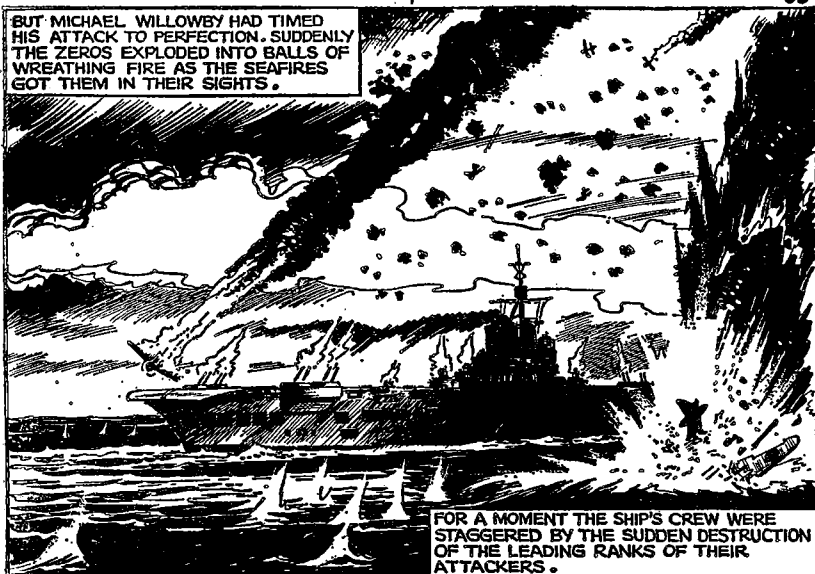
MICHAEL'S HANDS WERE STICKY ON THE CONTROL COLUMN AS HE SHARPLY DROPPED THE NOSE OF HIS SPITFIRE. IF HE HAD LEFT IT TOO LATE - WITH SUICIDE PILOTS IN THE ZEROS, THE SHIP WAS DOOMED.



ON BOARD THE CARRIER, THE EVER SWELLING SCREAM OF THE DIVING ZEROS FILLED THE AIR AND STRAINED NERVES TO BREAKING POINT. THE GUNNERS, WITH TERRIBLE URGENCY, PUMPED EVERYTHING THEY COULD AT THE ENEMY.

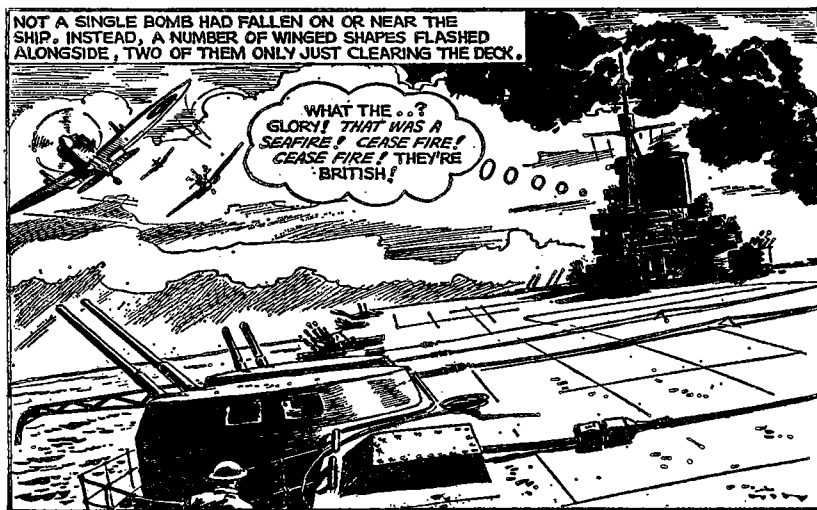


BUT MICHAEL WILLOWBY HAD TIMED HIS ATTACK TO PERFECTION. SUDDENLY THE ZEROS EXPLODED INTO BALLS OF WREATHING FIRE AS THE SEAFIRES GOT THEM IN THEIR SIGHTS.



FOR A MOMENT THE SHIP'S CREW WERE STAGGERED BY THE SUDDEN DESTRUCTION OF THE LEADING RANKS OF THEIR ATTACKERS.

NOT A SINGLE BOMB HAD FALLEN ON OR NEAR THE SHIP. INSTEAD, A NUMBER OF WINGED SHAPES FLASHED ALONGSIDE, TWO OF THEM ONLY JUST CLEARING THE DECK.

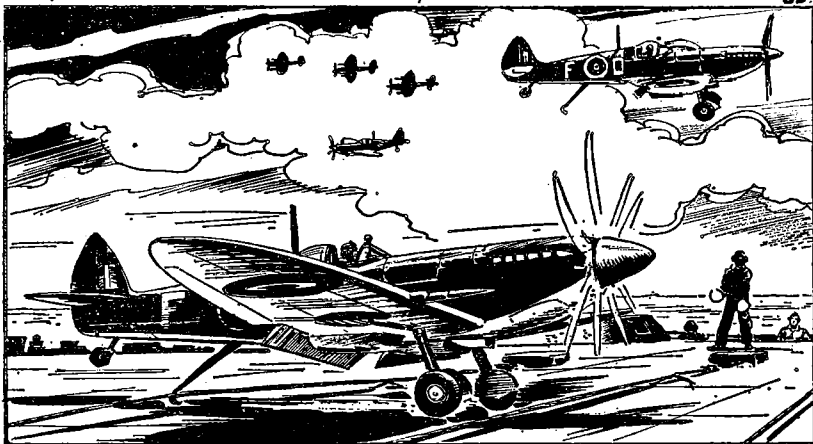


SUB-LIEUTENANT DICK GLANVILLE RUSHED OVER TO THE BATTING POSITION AND GRABBED THE BATS . . .



CAPTAIN GLANVILLE HIMSELF WENT TO THE SO RECENTLY DESERTED COMMANDER-FLYING'S POSITION. HE WAS BEGINNING TO FUSS OVER THEIR RETURN LIKE A HEN OVER HER CHICKENS . . .





IT WAS A MOMENTOUS HOMECOMING. WHEN MICHAEL WILLOWBY REPORTED TO THE COMPASS PLATFORM, HE FOUND THE CAPTAIN DEEPLY MOVED.

...AND YOU REALISE BREWSTER'S PART IN IT ALL, SIR?

THAT I DO, MICHAEL! THEY'LL BE BRINGING HIM OUT ANYWAY. I'VE HEARD THE R.A.F. ARE FINALLY CLOSING DOWN THE ATOLL. THE JAPS ARE OVER-RUNNING EVERYWHERE.



BUT NOT WITH THEIR FLEET, I THINK SIR!

NO, BY HARRY! NOT WITH THEIR FLEET! WE'VE SEEN TO THAT—OR RATHER YOU HAVE! I DON'T THINK THE JAP NAVY WILL WORRY US IN INDIAN WATERS NOW.



THIRTY-SIX HOURS LATER, THE *INSUPERABLE* STEAMED MAJESTICALLY INTO COLOMBO — DRESSED OVERALL. AS SHE ENTERED HARBOUR, WITH HER MARINE BAND PLAYING, SHE PASSED A BATTLESHIP NEWLY ARRIVED FROM ENGLAND...



BUT CAPTAIN RICHARD GLANVILLE D.S.O.; R.N. BORE NO ENVY FOR HER COMMANDER. HE KNEW NOW THAT HE WAS PROUD TO COMMAND THE MOST POTENT TYPE OF CAPITAL SHIP AFLOAT — THE CARRIER WHICH WAS INDEED *INSUPERABLE*.

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